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ABSTRACT

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required partners in the one-stop system mandated by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The following features have long characterized VR: the primary goal of integrated competitive employment for persons with disabilities; state flexibility in VR systems, approaches, and structures; case management with individualized and comprehensive services; use of assistive technology; consumer choice and participation; inclusion of individuals with severe disabilities; and a comprehensive research base. Inclusion, access, and impact have been deemed the three major VR themes for the 21st century. The Rehabilitation Act of 1992 introduced provisions to increase coordination and linkages between the education and VR systems to serve individuals with disabilities who are transitioning from school to higher education or employment. The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1998, Title IV of WIA, go further by emphasizing collaboration and cooperation across the entire workforce investment system as the best approach to meaningful improvements, including increased employment, in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Well-developed, collaborative WIA partnerships will allow all

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partners to benefit from each other's resources and expertise while fulfilling their own vital roles. (Annotated lists of 21 print and 3 World Wide Web resources constitute approximately 80% of this document.) (MN)

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TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERT NO. 31

by Michael E. Wonacott

2002

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required partners in the One-Stop system mandated by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (Hoff 2000). WIA calls for an interactive, mutually beneficial relationship between VR and the One-Stop system. This **Alert** identifies important issues and trends in VR that can affect that relationship, including differing definitions of disability and eligibility for services, availability and appropriate use of services and resources from all partners, and consumer choice in selecting One-Stop services.

Vocational rehabilitation has long been characterized by the primary goal of integrated competitive employmeht for persons with disabilities; state flexibility in VR systems, approaches, and structures; case management with individualized and comprehensive services; use of assistive technology; consumer choice and participation; inclusion of individuals with severe disabilities; and a comprehensive research base (Carney, in Perlman and Hansen 1995). McAlees (in Perlman and Hansen 1995) says inclusion, access, and impact are the three major VR themes for the 21st century, leading to increased emphasis in VR on independent living, consumer control, career development (as opposed to just job placement), lifelong services, serving the most severely disabled (e.g., through supported rather than competitive employment) and a shift in emphasis from program capacity to service quality.

The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1992 introduced provisions to increase coordination and linkages between the education and VR systems to serve individuals with disabilities transitioning from school to higher education or employment. The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1998, Title IV of WIA, go further by emphasizing collaboration and cooperation across the entire work force investment system as the best approach to meaningful improvements, including increased employment, in the lives of individuals with disabilities; working across systems highlights state and local implementation issues such as communication, linkages, cooperation, collaboration, and coordination (Kochhar 1998). Well-developed, collaborative WIA partnerships will allow all partners to benefit from each other's resources and expertise while fulfilling their own vital roles (Hoff 2000).

Resources

Benz, M. R.; Johnson, D. K.; Mikkelsen, K. S.; and Lindstrom, L. E. "Improving Collaboration between Schools and Vocational Rehabilitation: Stakeholder Identified Barriers and Strategies." ***Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*** 18, no. 2 (Fall 1995): 133-144.
Recommends strategies to improve knowledge of special education and VR staff, coordination of school and VR roles (assessment practices, transition planning), and support for students and parents.

Bolton, B., and Akridge, R. L. "A Meta-Analysis of Skills Training Programs for Rehabilitation Clients." ***Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*** 38, no. 3 (March 1995): 262-273.
Analysis of results of 15 experimental studies of 10 small-group skills training interventions suggested that VR clients received substantial benefit; recommended wider implementation with VR clients.

Colley, D., and Gingerich, J. ***Vocational Rehabilitation Services: A Consumer Guide for Postsecondary Students.*** Washington, DC: HEATH Resource Center, American Council on Education, 1996. (ED 394 255)
Question-and-answer format covers key VR information and implications for postsecondary students, including transition from secondary education and coordination with postsecondary disability services.

Dean, D. H.; Dolan, R. C.; and Schmidt, R. M. "Evaluating the Vocational Rehabilitation Program Using Longitudinal Data: Evidence for a Quasiexperimental Research Design." ***Evaluation Review*** 23, no. 2 (April 1999): 162-189.
Analysis of an 8-year national panel data set of 28,986 VR client records for 14 disability cohorts indicated that the VR program is generally cost effective (although not across all disabilities), with substantial long-term earning gains possible; previous research showing little evidence of long-term treatment effects may have been affected by selection bias.

Dowdy, C. A. "Vocational Rehabilitation and Special Education: Partners in Transition for Individuals with Learning Disabilities." ***Journal of Learning Disabilities*** 29, no. 2 (March 1996): 137-147.
Compares special education and VR definitions and diagnosis of learning disability and eligibility; discusses range of VR services available; recommendations for successful transition include informing students and families about VR services, empowering students to make informed choices, informing VR counselors about learning disabilities, and preparing special educators to add a focus on employment outcomes to secondary curricula.

Foley, S. M.; Butterworth, J.; and Heller, A. "Vocational Rehabilitation Interagency Activity Improving Supported Employment for People with Severe Disabilities." ***Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*** 15, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 37-42.
Written agreements between state VR agencies and other state agencies providing disability services are most frequent and viewed as having more positive impact on supported employment outcomes. Agencies providing employment services to the general population (e.g., One-Stops, other WIA partners) are more likely involved in informal interagency activity, which is viewed as having no impact.

Fry, R. R., ed. ***Operationalizing Consumer Decision Making and Choice in the VR Process: Report from the Study Group.*** Menomonie: Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute, University of Wisconsin-Stout, 1995.
Discusses consumer informed choice in VR; changing roles of consumer, counselor, supervisors, administrators and others; evolution and reform of VR; and process of implementing informed choice.

Gilson, B. B. "One-Stop Career Centers: Will They Be Used by People with Disabilities?" ***Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*** 15, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 30-36.
Discusses potential strengths of One-Stops as a resource for people with disabilities; issues in effective use include participation of local disability agencies and organizations as partners, accessibility, availability of assistive technology, availability of adult education and literacy services, One-Stop staff expertise, appropriateness of self-service, and disclosure of disability.

Gregg, N.; Scott, S.; McPeek, D.; and Ferri, B. "Definitions and Eligibility Criteria Applied to the Adolescent and Adult Population with Learning Disabilities across Agencies." ***Learning Disability Quarterly*** 22, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 13-23.
Only special education and VR agencies consistently defined learning disabilities and eligibility criteria, but definitions varied widely across and within even those agencies; suggestions are offered for definitions and eligibility criteria policy across state agencies.

Hoff, D. ***WIA and One-Stop Centers: Opportunities and Issues for the Disability Community. Institute Brief 10, no. 1.*** Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion, 2000. <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ici/publications/pdf/wiaonestop.pdf>
As required One-Stop partners, state VR agencies face issues of different eligibility, order of selection, customer choice and options, appropriate use of VR funds and staff, and creating interactive, mutually beneficial relationships for seamless service delivery.

Kochhar, C. "New Vocational Rehabilitation Law Revitalizes Transition Services." ***Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education*** 20, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 3-11.
Outlines implications of WIA for transition policies in prior legislation, coordination of state and local rehabilitation services, and eligibility criteria. Presents untested assumptions and policy analysis questions to guide reconfiguration of VR programs.

Marrone, J.; Hoff, D.; and Helm, D. T. "Person-Centered Planning for the Millennium: We're Old Enough to Remember When PCP Was Just a Drug." ***Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*** 8, no. 3 (June 1997): 285-297.
Review of core values in person-centered planning (PCP) and key system and skill problems leads to conclusions that PCP requires (1) attention to values, not program standards; (2) different client-staff power relationships and processes to accommodate core values; and (3) greater attention to individual client characteristics.

Neubert, D. A., and Moon, M. S. "How a Transition Profile Helps Students Prepare for Life in the Community." ***Teaching Exceptional Children*** 33, no. 2 (November-December 2000): 20-25.
The Transition Profile summarizes pertinent information collected during high school and may be used to establish eligibility for VR services.

Perlman, L. G., and Hansen, C. E., eds. ***Vocational Rehabilitation: Preparing for the 21st Century. A Report on the 18th Mary E. Switzer Memorial Seminar.*** Alexandria, VA: National Rehabilitation Association, 1995. (ED 385 044)
Compendium includes "State/Federal Program Issues and Trends" (Nell C. Carney); "Consumerism and Choice: Basic Standards for Judging Efforts and Expectations in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process" (Patricia A. Morrissey); "Rehabilitation Education in the 21st Century" (Daniel C. McAlees); "Providers of Rehabilitation Services" (Patrick W. McKenna) "Women and Vocational Rehabilitation: An Urgent Need for New Directions" (Margaret A. Nosek); "Rehabilitation as a Knowledge Business" (Jon Lundin).

President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. ***Getting Down to Business: A Blueprint for Creating and Supporting Entrepreneurial Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities.*** Washington, DC: PCEPD, 2000. (ED 450 525)
Discusses small business and self-employment opportunities for people with disabilities; offers recommendations for addressing barriers to business ownership.

Schulzinger, R. ***Key Transition Issues for Youth with Disabilities and Chronic Health Conditions. Healthy & Ready to Work Policy Brief.*** Gainesville, FL: Institute for Child Health Policy, 2000. (ED 446 398)
Explains changes in Supplemental Security Income program, including work incentives, maintaining health care and benefits during transition years, and key transition issues, including rehabilitation services and service coordination.

Silverstein, R. ***Provisions in the Workforce Investment Act Describing the Interplay between Workforce Investment Systems and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. Policy Brief 1, no. 1.*** Boston: Institute for Community Inclusion, Children's Hospital, 1999. <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ici/publications/pdf/policy1.pdf>
Provisions include VR membership and participation in (1) state and local work force investment boards; (2) development of state plan for coordinated, unduplicated services; and (3) planning and operation of One-Stop delivery system. WIA Title IV, Rehabilitation Amendments, addresses submission of state plan for VR programs, interagency agreements on payment for VR services, reporting and data elements, and requirements for cooperative agreements between state VR agency and other state work force investment components.

Silverstein, R. ***Provisions in the Final Regulations Governing the State VR Program Describing the Interplay with WIA and TWWIIA. Policy Brief 3, no. 2.*** Boston, MA: Institute for Community Inclusion, Children's Hospital, 2001. <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ici/publications/text/pb7text.html>
Final regulations envision creation of a streamlined collaborative partnership between state VR programs and other components of state work force investment systems, requiring major system changes and more activist role for state VR programs.

Tomlinson, P. A. ***Connections: Vocational Rehabilitation & Higher Education—Jointly Serving Consumers Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.*** Rochester, NY: Northeast Technical Assistance Center, Rochester Institute of Technology, 2000. (ED 449 620)
Training package to help postsecondary education and VR staff understand each other's philosophy, mandates, process, and issues and to promote productive working relationships.

Wermuth, T. R., and Grayson, T. E. ***Case Studies of State-Level Cross-Disciplinary Transition Policy Implementation.*** Champaign: Transition Research Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1995. (ED 392 191)
Examines processes and strategies to facilitate coordination of state-level special education, vocational education, and VR systems. Recommendations include specific interagency policies, capacity building, cross-discipline training, technical assistance, and process evaluation.

Williams, I. J.; Petty, D. M.; and Verstegen. "The Business Approach to Job Development." ***Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*** 10, no. 1 (February 1998): 23-29.
Four Tennessee community rehabilitation agencies used both cold calls and referrals in 6 months of tracked job development activity; substantially fewer rejections and more placements occurred with referral.

Web Resources

Institute for Community Inclusion <http://www.childrenshospital.org/ici> develops resources and supports for people with disabilities and their families, including publications on One-Stop centers and WIA.

Rehabilitation Services Administration, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, U. S. Department of Education <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/RSA/> is the principal federal agency authorized to carry out Titles I, III, VI, and VII, as well as specified portions of Title V of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

USWorkforce.org <http://usworkforce.org> is a gateway to WIA information, including legislation, policy, the One-Stop system, resources, and implementation questions.

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